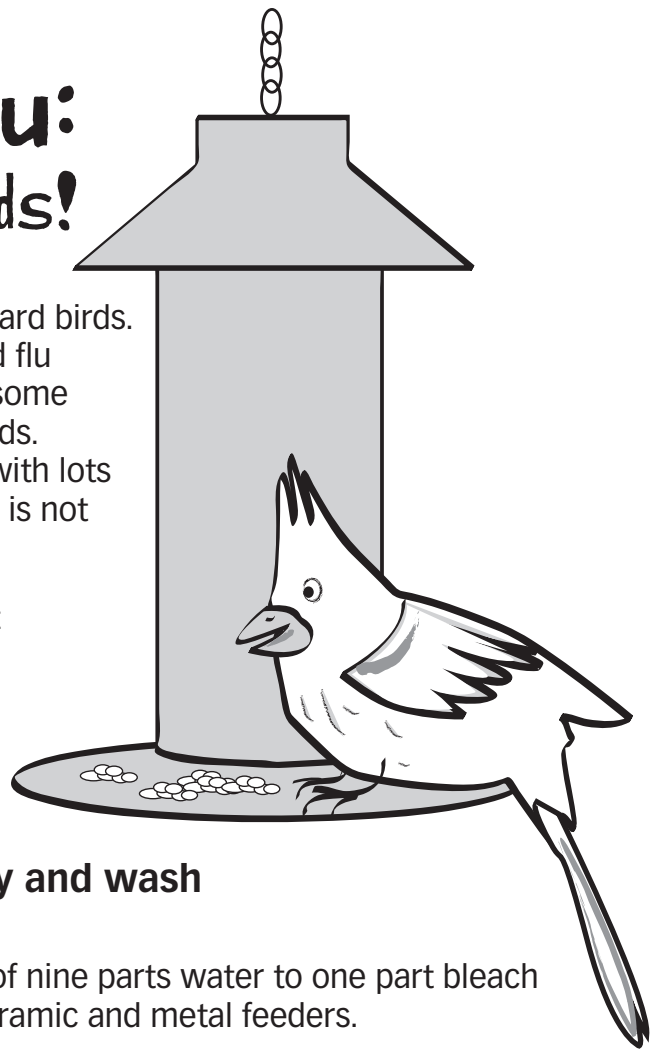


Bird Flu and You: It's Okay to Feed the Birds!

Some people may wonder if it is safe to feed backyard birds. That's because they have heard about a severe bird flu called H5N1 avian influenza. They have heard that some people may have gotten sick from touching sick birds. Other people have gotten sick from living in areas with lots of droppings from sick birds. Right now, this bird flu is not found anywhere in the United States.

Even if bird flu does come to the U.S., it's important to know that bird flu is hard for people to catch. Bird flu does not easily infect people.

So, if you enjoy feeding birds, go ahead! Here are some things you can do to keep it safe and fun:



Clean and disinfect bird feeders regularly and wash your hands afterward.

- Clean bird feeders every month with a solution of nine parts water to one part bleach to help get rid of bacteria and mold in plastic, ceramic and metal feeders.
- For wooden bird feeders, use a solution of three parts water to one part vinegar or plain, biodegradable soap.
- Sweep up and throw away droppings and hulls from around the base of the feeders.

Clean your bird bath regularly and wash your hands afterward.

- Change the water every two to three days to avoid algae buildup and stop mosquitoes from breeding.
- Mosquitoes can infect people with another illness, the West Nile virus.
- Sweep up and throw away droppings from around the base of the bird bath.

Do not touch any backyard birds with your bare hands.

- Backyard birds, although they might appear friendly, are wild birds. Wild birds can carry germs that might make you sick.
- A bird can look fine and still be sick.
- If you **MUST** handle a sick or dead bird, wear gloves and wash your hands afterward.



H5N1 Avian Influenza

To learn more about bird flu, visit www.nyhealth.gov